(b) if so, the decline in prices of sugar expected as a result thereof; and

(c) the impact of this decision on the overall performance of sugar industry and availability of sugar in the market and under PDS?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD) : (a) The mills who have obtained judicial directives are governed by the directions of the Hon'ble Courts in various writ petitions and civil suits.

(b) and (c) The availability of sugar in the open market as well as under Public Distribution System (PDS) has not been affected in any way.

Sugar release mechanism

5005. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the sugar release mechanism is being placed in Ninth Schedule of the Constitution;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps being taken to ensure proper implementation of this decision?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD) : (a) to (c) The amendment of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 is in hand to safeguard the interests of the sugarcane growers, producers of sugar and the general public. It is further proposed to place the Amending Act in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

Procurement of Foodgrains

5006. SHRI RUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA :

SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO :

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) what is Government's latest policy for procurement of foodgrains, wheat and rice to meet any eventuality;

(b) whether drought has reduced the foodgrain stocks; and

(c) if so, the action taken to replenish the stock adequately?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA) : (a) Under the present procurement policy, all the paddy and

wheat of Fair Average Quality (FAQ) norms offered for sale at the designated procurement centres are bought by the public procuring agencies at the Minimum Support Price (MSP). Rice is also collected under statutory levy from rice millers/dealers.

(b) and (c) As on 1-4-2003 the stock position of wheat and rice in the Central Pool was 156.45 lakh tonnes and 171.57 lakh tonnes respectively which is well above the minimum buffer norms. Due to drought conditions, there has been an increase in the offtake of foodgrains under the Special Component of Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) which has contributed to reduction of the excess stocks in the Central Pool. However, adequate quantities of rice and wheat have been procured by the Government to both maintain the prescribed buffer stocking norms as well as to meet the entire demand under TPDS and other Welfare Schemes.

Quota of ration for poor

5007. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has raised the monthly quota of ration for the 'poorest of the poor' under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana to 35 kg. per family; and

(b) if so, the justification therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA) : (a) and (b) Yes Sir. The quota of ration for the families under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) has been increased to 35 kg. per family per month with effect from 1.4.2002 to enhance the food security of the poorest of the poor in the country.

MSP of Crops

5008. SHRI SURENDRA LATH : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that the farmers in several States and particularly in Orissa are not getting Minimum Support Price for the crops they produce;

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government to ensure payment of MSP to the farmers in the State; and

(c) the steps taken to streamline the procurement process?